Directorate of Intelligence

Top Secret

[redacted]

25X1

Iran: The Ethnic Minorities [redacted]

25X1

An Intelligence Assessment

Top Secret

NESA 82-10284C

[redacted]

July 1982

Copy 267

25X1

Iran:
The Ethnic Minorities (U)

An Intelligence Assessment

Information available as of 30 June 1982
has been used in the preparation of this report.

This assessment was prepared by [redacted] 25X1
the Office of Near East–South Asia Analysis.
Comments and queries are welcome and may be
directed to the Chief, Persian Gulf Division, NESA,
[redacted] 25X1

This paper has been coordinated with the Directorate
of Operations and with the National Intelligence
Council. [redacted] 25X1

[redacted]

25X1

Iran: The Ethnic Minorities

25X1

Key Judgments

Hostility to the Khomeini regime and antiregime violence have not abated in the ethnic and tribal areas of Iran, but they are not a major near-term threat to the clerical government. Tribal leaders continue to complain of economic, political, and religious discrimination; sectarian conflict between the Shia government in Tehran and the largely Sunni Kurds, Turkomans, and Baluch continues.

No significant separatist sentiment exists among the tribal minorities. Regional leaders instead seek autonomy within a unified Iran. More limited goals include control over local security, administrative, and legislative functions; use of local languages in the schools; preservation of tribal culture; and an increased share of economic benefits and employment opportunities. Considerable de facto autonomy already exists in some areas.

The regime shows little inclination to accommodate regional demands. It continues to suppress regional dissent with the Revolutionary Guards and to replace independent-minded local officials and religious leaders.

The major ethnic groups are unlikely to develop a coordinated antiregime front. They remain badly fragmented three years after the revolution, as they have always been, because of poor leadership, internecine rivalry, and little contact between major tribes. Little outside support is being given to the ethnic dissident groups, except for Iraqi support to the Kurds and Baluch. Both Kurdish and Baluch leaders have intensified their efforts to gain additional Western support.

The Soviets have maintained contact with minority factions over the years and voiced support for minority rights. Since the revolution, however, they have encouraged the minorities to support the regime in Tehran. The Soviets apparently judge that their strategic interests are best served by cultivating a stronger relationship with the Iranian revolutionary government and supporting Iranian territorial integrity. Possible Soviet support for Baluch dissidents probably reflects an effort to create instability in Pakistani Baluchistan, rather than in Iran.

25X1

25X1

[redacted]

25X1

Kurdistan, the most violent area, is the only potential center of tribal resistance to the regime. Recent attempts by Kurdish dissident groups to coordinate their efforts, to develop links with Masud Rajavi's Mujahedin—the major leftist dissident force—and to broaden their international support could provide a focal point for antiregime activity.

[redacted]

25X1

[redacted]

25X1
25X1

25X1

Iran: The Ethnic Minorities

25X1

The Present Setting

Dissatisfaction with the clerical regime continues among the ethnic minorities of Iran, which constitute nearly half the population and are largely scattered around the periphery of the country. Ethnic and tribal spokesmen make sometimes-exaggerated claims that the Khomeini government is trying to crush ethnic minorities and tribes, particularly the non-Shia Kurds and Baluch. The political significance of this sentiment is reduced substantially by the minorities' inability to cooperate with each other or with tribal groups and by their geographic dispersal.

The regime continues to reject meaningful formal autonomy, blaming ethnic dissidence on outsiders. It replaces independent-minded officials and religious leaders with others loyal to the regime and uses Revolutionary Guards to enforce order in the tribal areas. To dampen ethnic hostility, the regime preaches the importance of Sunni-Shia cooperation and has urged loyalty during the war with Iraq. Tehran also appears to be making greater efforts to provide funds for local economic development. Nevertheless, de facto autonomy exists in many of the areas distant from Tehran, and tribally inspired antiregime violence continues at varying levels throughout the country.

After the revolution in February 1979, the ethnic minority groups quickly asserted their claims to greater control over their local populations and resources. Most had unrealistic notions of the new regime's willingness to accommodate their demands. Ethnic and tribal groups began to organize and demonstrate, and contentious negotiations began with the new government amid some violence. The government refused to grant local tribes administrative and legislative control, religious and cultural freedom, including the right to teach and publish in native languages, and increased economic benefits and political representation. Ethnic minorities appeared more receptive to the efforts of the government under President Bani-Sadr, but relations with Tehran have deteriorated steadily since his ouster.

Despite their considerable hostility, the ethnic minorities are unlikely to attempt to unseat the regime in Tehran. They are deeply divided by different interests and political viewpoints. The different ethnic groups do not coordinate their efforts, and within the groups, different organizations have appeared, changed, and declined continually since February 1979. Most groups are militarily weak. A generational gap is reportedly appearing in some tribal areas. Older members look to more conservative elements, including exiled members of the old regime, while younger members are turning to leftist organizations. No single leader has appeared who can compel cooperation among these disparate and disorganized groups.

25X1

25X1

Kurds

Tenuous Government Control. Government control among the nearly 4 million Kurds in Kurdistan and western Azarbayjan is tenuous. Clashes occur daily throughout the region, which is the area of strongest resistance to the Khomeini regime. A government offensive in late October 1981 followed rebel execution of a government emissary. Rebels have begun executing captured government troops,

25X1

Hit-and-run attacks and assassinations continue on both sides, particularly in the areas of Sanandaj, Mahabad, Bukan, and Oshnoviyeh. Progovernment clergymen were assassinated in December and February, and a refugee Afghan Muslim clergyman was killed in early January, according to press reports.

25X1
25X1
25X1

25X1

Kurdish rebel forces control much of the rugged countryside, and their morale is reportedly good. They are more successful in the winter and retreat to the high ground in the spring. They hold positions in the hills overlooking cities. They launch attacks against the Revolutionary Guards but avoid direct contact with regular Army troops.

25X1

25X1

25X1
25X1

25X1

632112 6-82

Kurdish forces are hampered most by declining numbers and supply shortages. Kurdish dissidents are split along ideological and tribal lines and by personal rivalries. The number of active fighters is reportedly down from 60,000 in 1980 to less than 25,000, The flow of supplies from abroad has been reduced by tighter border security and government checkpoints inside Iran. The government has further weakened the rebels' position by denying them access to the press, cutting communications, and providing financial support to some of the less hostile tribes as well as to Iraqi Kurds.

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

Relations With the Central Government. Kurdish leaders claim publicly to have no hope of working with the current government for greater autonomy. They boycotted the referendum on the draft constitution for the new government, which provided no rights for the Sunni minorities. Repeated attempts at negotiation have failed. The last major effort to settle the conflict was in March 1981, when a government delegation, including Khomeini's son-in-law, met with representatives of the leading opposition group, the Kurdish Democratic Party,

The negotiations collapsed when several groups refused to participate and government representatives refused to meet with Abdol Rahman Qasemlu, the principal Kurdish leader.

Principal Kurdish Groups. The Kurdish Democratic Party, the strongest ethnic minority organization in Iran, controls much of the countryside in Kurdistan and is a bellwether for other Iranian minority groups.

The most powerful faction of the KDP is led by Qasemlu, the secretary general of the party. The 50-year-old Paris-trained economist returned to Iran in December 1978 after nearly two decades in exile in Prague, Iraq, and Paris.

25X1

25X1

The third faction of the KDP is a tribal force under Sanar Mamadi.

25X1

25X1

25X1

Another powerful rebel force in Kurdistan is the Komala, or Kurdish Workers' Party, a small but effective anti-Soviet radical leftist group that enjoys the support of Sheikh Ez-ed-Din Hoseini, the spiritual leader of the Kurds. Hoseini, the most popular figure in Kurdistan, was once a member of the KDP and was outlawed by Khomeini along with Qasemlu.

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

Komala founded the Kurdish Farmers' Council and reportedly enjoys support among Kurdish farmers.

25X1

25X1

Three significant tribal groups that operate independently from the KDP are the forces of Sardar Jaf and the Iraqi Kurdish forces of Masud and Idris Barzani and of Jalal Talabani. Jaf, a promonarchist Iranian Kurd and once aide de camp to the Shah,

25X1

25X1

25X1

Jaf was recently implicated by the Khomeini regime in the bombing of an army barracks in Tehran last February.

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

Masud Barzani, the leader of the Iraqi Kurdish Democratic Party, and his brother Idris lead a tribal force who oppose the KDP and are supported by the Iranian Government in operations against Iraq and Iranian Kurdish rebels. They are also perennial rivals of another Iraqi Kurdish group, Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. His forces are rumored to smuggle arms and supplies into Iran to Kurdish dissidents and may have begun working with the KDP.

25X1
25X1
25X1

Azarbayjanis

Antiregime violence has been less widespread among the Turkic-speaking Azarbayjanis, concentrated in eastern Azarbayjan, than among the Kurds. This agriculturally rich and strategically important area—it borders the USSR, directly adjacent to the Soviet Azerbaydzhani Republic, and contains the overland trade routes to Europe—has been the location of considerable leftist dissident activity. The government in Tehran is trying to contain growing leftist activity in the area,

25X1
25X1
25X1

Two antiregime dissidents were publicly hanged in Tabriz in February 1982 as a warning to opposition elements.

25X1

The nearly 15 million Azarbayjanis are potentially the most powerful Iranian minority, with the capital of their province, Tabriz, a major city. The region has

25X1

produced noted liberal politicians such as Mehdi Bazargan, Shahpour Bakhtiar, Rahmatollah Moghadam-Maraghei, the ex-Governor of eastern Azarbayjan, and Hasan Nazih, the ex-director of the National Iranian Oil Company—the so-called Turkish mafia. Most of these figures have been silenced or exiled by the regime. Azarbayjanis have also wielded influence in trade and have played a significant role in the military. After the revolution the Azaris lobbied on behalf of Azarbayjani, Bakhtiari, Turkoman, Qashqai, and other Turkic tribes with demands similar to those of the Kurds. The regime's subsequent purge of moderate Azarbayjani leaders and Shariat-Madari's failure to take a more active role have left the field open to leftist groups.

The regime, moreover, has successfully reduced Shariat-Madari's threat as a rival to Khomeini by implicating him in recent coup plotting and stripping him of his religious authority. He has been isolated from his supporters, who have not moved publicly to oppose the regime's actions, and he himself has done nothing more than deny his involvement in coup plotting. Barring a call from him, his Azarbayjani supporters are unlikely to rebel.

Opposition Groups. No opposition groups appear to have significant support in the Azarbayjani area. Most observers believe that the Muslim People's Republic Party (MPRP), which has supported Shariat-Madari, has declined in strength and influence from a peak of 15,000 armed men and up to 3 million sympathizers in early 1980. It may still maintain some influence in the Army. MPRP members may be involved in several new Azarbayjani splinter groups: the Party of Unity for Freedom, which claims the regime is trying to destroy the Iranian Army; the National Equality Party, led by Muhtar Karabag and headquartered in Turkey, which claims to represent the Azarbayjani, Turkoman, and Qashqai Turks; and the Organization of Azarbayjanis Living Abroad, which calls for the return of a constitutional monarchy. The major leftist group traditionally active in the area, the Azarbayjani Democratic Party, has supported the regime in Tehran and is closely allied to the Communist Tudeh Party.

Baluch

Government control is minimal and violence continues in the barren but strategically located province of Baluchistan in southeastern Iran, inhabited by less than 1 million Baluch tribesmen. Since spring 1981, tribesmen have fought increased harassment by the Revolutionary Guards, and intermittent clashes have resulted in the deaths of dozens of tribesmen and government security personnel. Widespread arrests were made in late August, and additional Revolutionary Guards were sent to the area in late 1981. The Guards are largely confined to urban areas. Army and gendarmerie units avoid clashes with the tribesmen, who focus their attacks on the fanatical Guards.

25X1
25X1

The Baluch seek limited autonomy within a united Iran, a guarantee of economic and political control of their area, and religious freedom for the predominantly Sunni tribesmen. Because the Baluch voted against Iran's Islamic constitution, government-province relations, particularly Sunni-Shia relations, have deteriorated steadily. Some Baluch publicly support a return to a monarchy under Reza Pahlavi.

25X1

Tehran has made limited efforts to meet the economic complaints of the Baluch and defuse Sunni-Shia hostility. It sent three delegations to the province in 1981 to examine economic problems and created a "Central Sunni Assembly," which will be little more than a government propaganda mouthpiece. The Reconstruction Crusade, which consists of teams of young volunteers, also has been working on development projects, but its proselytizing of the young angers tribal leaders. Tribal forces killed two Crusade members in an ambush in February.

25X1
25X1

Government officials have sought to win the support of Sunni religious leaders, but such efforts have made the Baluch suspicious of these figures.

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

Political Groups. The most powerful antiregime group in Baluchistan, the Baluch Unity Front (Vahdat-e-Baluch), enjoys wide support. It was formed in April 1980 to unite tribal groups working to overthrow the regime. Headquartered in Karachi, its leadership, a Supreme Council of 20 members, includes all the major tribal leaders in Baluchistan.

25X1

Although leftwing groups such as Peykar, the Mujahedin, and the nascent Baluchistan Student Organization (BSO) are active in the province, leftwing groups have less influence in Baluchistan than elsewhere in Iran. The region is politically conservative, promonarchist, and pro-Western. Sharp differences exist, however, between the older tribal leaders and some of the younger, left-leaning student leaders,

25X1

The older Baluch fear an independent Baluchistan would be influenced by the Soviets, while younger Baluch are growing impatient with the inactivity and conservatism of the tribal elders.

Qashqai

25X1

The approximately 500,000 largely nomadic, ethnically Turkic Qashqai in Iran are deeply hostile to the regime in Tehran. The potential opposition, therefore, is considerable. Organization of an effective opposition, however, is unlikely. Tribal leaders exercise control over only limited areas, tribal fighters are poorly armed, and there is little prospect for intertribal cooperation.

25X1

25X1

25X1

the

25X1

25X1

Qashqai view the regime as inept and ruthless, mishandling the economy, corrupting religion with politics, and persecuting the religious minorities. Economic hardship in the tribal area of the Qashqai has been increased by the presence of several hundred thousand war refugees from Khuzestan.

Hostility to the regime has intensified since the murder of a Qashqai leader by Revolutionary Guards in December 1980, and is unlikely to abate. Repeated clashes between tribesmen and government security forces since the tribal migration of spring 1981 have been condemned as "banditry" by officials in Tehran and Shiraz, but the tribes claim they are responding to attempts by the regime to cut off supplies coming into the tribal areas. Security in the area is poor and government control, tenuous.

Tactics of the Regime. propaganda and pressure tactics have helped the government contain its Qashqai opponents. Government-paid teachers are sent to mandatory training seminars in the area and threatened with loss of their jobs if they do not defend and rationalize government policies. The Reconstruction Crusade is also active in the province, working for little or no salary and propagandizing the population.

As in other provinces, the government ultimately relies on repression by the Revolutionary Guards. the Guards are highly indoctrinated, deeply distrustful, even of each other, belligerent, and poorly disciplined. They are reassigned frequently to avoid the formation of local attachments. In some towns and villages, they are in control; in others they have been forced to yield control to the Mujahedin or tribal authorities. In the Qashqai area tribal authorities reportedly control many of the roads.

The Opposition. No single opposition group or tribal leader is likely to gain the support of all the Qashqai, The authority of the tribal leaders in the area—once considerable—has eroded, and they lack the support to expand their influence or play a national role.

25X1

25X1

25X1

The Mujahedin account for about 50 percent of the leftist opposition in the area, but their propaganda is ineffective, They are viewed with suspicion by much of the public, and people are put off by their socialism. The other leftist groups—Fedayeen, Peykar, Tudeh—have only marginal support.

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

Turkomans

Recent information is sketchy from among the 1.5-2 million Turkoman Iranians, who are concentrated in Mazandaran and Khorasan Provinces in northeast Iran along the Caspian Sea and the border with the Soviet Union. Antiregime agitation and violence appear leftist-inspired, with little involvement of Turkoman tribal elements. Violent clashes in Amol in late January left several dozen leftists and Revolutionary Guards dead.

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

After the revolution in February 1979, the largely Sunni Turkomans were quick to assert their claim to autonomy and to press Tehran for local control. They demanded an end to political and military pressure, as well as the right to teach and publish in the Turkish language, Turkoman representation in local and national governments, and the right to maintain local customs. Conflicts developed immediately, particularly over the issues of land reform and excessive abuse

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

by Revolutionary Guards and Sunni-Shia differences. There were frequent clashes with Revolutionary Guards and reports of some Turkoman tribal people fleeing into the Turkoman areas of the southern USSR, as well as a reported Soviet agreement to allow them to migrate north.

In late March 1979, a partial takeover of Gonbad-e-Kabus by dissatisfied Turkomans was quelled by government forces. The government entered into extensive negotiations with the Turkomans, represented by Sheikh Ana Kilic Seyh Nakshabandi, a Sunni cleric, and Muhammet Sehi, the reputed political leader of the Turkomans, both of whom were members of the Turkoman People's Association, a group formed in April 1979 to work for Turkoman autonomy. The region was reportedly quiet until the end of 1979. In January and February 1980, violence recurred.

described tribal disaffection similar to that of the Qashqai. the Turkomans were politically disorganized and lacked effective leadership and a coherent philosophy beyond general dissatisfaction with the regime. Traditional leaders, many of whom were large landowners, were trying to avoid open conflict with the regime and did not want to risk losing their land. The rule of law was tenuous, and fights over land occurred even among Turkoman tribesmen.

The Turkomans were politically uninterested in anything more than maintaining the status quo and avoiding confrontation with the Revolutionary Guard. The field has been left open to secular leftist groups who have been active in the region. The more moderate Turkoman tribal groups have dropped out of sight. There is no indication of support for the newly formed National Equality Party with its vague appeal to a Turkish ethnic consciousness along with loyalty to Iran in a "federal liberal democracy."

the Turkoman population is about evenly divided between older tribesmen, some of whom reportedly back exiled General Ariana and support a military takeover, and the young, particularly students, who are pro-Communist.

25X1

Arabs

Little information is available on dissident activities among Iran's 1.5 million Arabs. The Arabs are concentrated in Khuzestan Province, scene of the most serious fighting of the Iran-Iraq war and location of Iran's major oilfields, the Abadan refinery, and the important port of Khorramshahr. Widespread arrests last summer followed several terrorist attacks on oil facilities and pipelines in the area, but no major attacks have occurred since. Despite Iraqi claims to the contrary, the Iranian Arabs have demonstrated no desire to sever their connection to Iran, and the majority of Arabs have either fled the fighting or stayed to work among Iranian supporters of the regime.

25X1

Unrest and sporadic clashes, which began almost immediately after the revolution of 1979, were ruthlessly repressed by the then governor general of the province, Admiral Madani, who opposed autonomy for the Arabs. The predominantly Shia Arabs have tended to live apart from the 50 percent of the province population that is non-Arab and have claimed that economic, cultural, and political discrimination under the Shah was being continued by Khomeini. Arabs claim traditional, strong Persian prejudice against them and have argued, accurately, in their propaganda that they are underpaid and virtually excluded from better jobs as technicians and managers in the oilfields and from local administration.

25X1

Serious fighting broke out in June 1979. Madani and the senior Arab religious leader, Ayatollah Khaqani, signed an agreement to try to ease the tension. It made no mention of autonomy and was vague or silent on other Arab demands. Khaqani declared the agreement null and void almost immediately, charging the government with not fulfilling its commitments to release imprisoned Arabs or to try those accused of

25X1

25X1

harassing Arabs. Sabotage and terrorist attacks resumed, and on 16 July 1979 Khaqani was taken to Qom, where he remains under house arrest. Response to Khaqani's removal was muted.

Iraq quickly seized on the dissidence in Khuzestan to renew agitation for an independent "Arabestan" and to charge the area was being illegally occupied by Iran. There are indications that Iraq continues to support Arab dissidents in the province with funds, weapons, and training. Iraq was reportedly behind the seizure of the Iranian Embassy in London by Iranian Arabs in May 1980. With the collapse of the Iraqi military presence in Khuzestan, the bargaining strength of Arab Shias in their dealings with Tehran will be greatly weakened.

Major Opposition Groups. Several groups appear active in Khuzestan; others that were active after the revolution have dropped from sight. A major group, the Arabestan Liberation Front (or Khuzestan Liberation Front), is a well-armed radical leftist group, many of whose members returned to Iran after the revolution from exile in Iraq, Libya, Kuwait, or Syria. The group has called in its propaganda for increased expenditure of oil revenues on "the people," increased government investment in Khuzestan, preferential employment opportunities for Arabs, and Arabic as the official local language. Formed with Egyptian and Iraqi backing in 1964, the group has longstanding ties with radical Arab states and the Palestinians.

The group has been responsible for a number of Iraqi-backed sabotage and terrorist attacks, including perhaps an oil pipeline explosion in May 1981 which the Tehran government blamed on "Iraqi-backed Arab separatists."

Several other groups were reported to be active before the outbreak of the war with Iraq, including the Political Organization of the Arab Masses. It advocated armed resistance to the Khomeini regime and was supported by Ayatollah Khaqani. The group went underground in mid-1979, and some of its leaders went into exile. It reportedly organized Black Wednesday, an extremist group that appeared in July 1979 and has claimed credit for sabotaging oil pipelines.

Maki and Abdul Karim Faisali, the urbanized leaders of the Faisali tribe of southern Khuzestan, also are reported to have a strong following in the province. Now in hiding, the two may have connections to another extremist group, the Arab People's Political Party, a separatist group with connections to Iraq that may be tied to the Arabestan Liberation Front.

None of these groups appears to have been active recently in Khuzestan, and antiregime activity will probably remain stymied by the Iran-Iraq war. Only one new group has appeared recently. a group called the Arab Front for the Liberation of Ahvaz was established in September 1981 under the leadership of Sayyid Hashim Sayyid Adnan. In December 1981 they announced their intent to form an "Arab governmental authority" in the region, to contact Arab and other foreign governments for support, and to seek self-determination for Iran's Arabs at the UN. The group's program suggests it may be an Iraqi front organization.

The Soviets and the Iranian Minorities

Historically, Iran's relations with the Soviet Union have fluctuated widely. After the ascent of the Communist government in Russia and the rise of Pahlavi rule in Iran in the 1920s, the Soviets sought to weaken the strongly anti-Communist government in Tehran by supporting minority claims to greater local autonomy. Failing in their post–World War II effort to obtain oil concessions in Iran and unable to forestall the expansion of Iran's relations with the United States, the Soviets sought to expand their influence in the minority areas, particularly those along Iran's northern border. They tried to gain a more direct foothold inside Iran with the establishment of "people's republics" in Kurdistan and Azarbayjan. Despite the relatively short life of these "republics," the Soviets continued during the Shah's reign to support autonomy efforts by the minorities to pressure the government in Tehran.

With the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism, the Soviets apparently reduced their support for regional autonomy in order to contain instability on their own

25X1

borders and work for a pro-Soviet regime in Tehran. Soviet activity now is confined to low-level contacts. Overt support for minority rights and autonomy has declined significantly since the Shah's departure. Moscow appears to be concentrating its efforts on developing closer ties with the new revolutionary government in Tehran. The Soviet-sponsored radio, National Voice of Iran, has called upon minority groups to support the regime in Tehran and Iranian territorial integrity.

The Soviets maintain interest in those minority areas bordering the Soviet Union, in Baluchistan, and in those areas with significant leftist elements. They maintain extensive contacts with both the Azarbayjani Democratic Party and some elements of the Kurdish Democratic Party inside Iran. In their covert dealings with the minority groups, the Soviets try to use their influence to gain leverage over the central government and hedge their bets should the political situation in Iran become hostile to them. Any overt support for the minorities risks antagonizing the Khomeini regime, which is already suspicious of the Soviets.

Kurds. Relations between the Soviet Union and the Iranian Kurds, historically close, have been severely damaged by Soviet support for the regime in Tehran. The Kurds became disillusioned when they were urged by the Communist Tudeh Party and the USSR to support the revolutionary government in Tehran in the face of its unwillingness to grant meaningful autonomy. KDP leader Qasemlu, a longtime ally of Tudeh, broke with the party in June 1980 in protest over Tudeh's support for the regime. Seven pro-Tudeh members of the KDP formed a separate faction that enjoys little popular support among the Kurds. Soviet and Tudeh criticism of Qasemlu—for treason and counterrevolution—has been strident.

Azarbayjanis. Soviet interest in and influence among the Iranian Azarbayjani population traditionally has been considerable, fostered by the shared border and frequent cross-border activity. The Soviets are particularly interested in monitoring activity in this area because of their own Azari population of more than 5 million. Moreover, the large number of Azari Communists who fled to the USSR after the collapse of the Azarbayjan Democratic Republic in 1946 provides the Soviets with considerable assets.

25X1

25X1

The Azarbayjani Democratic Party, after the collapse of the short-lived Soviet-sponsored republic, remained pro-Soviet and closely allied to the Tudeh Party. It formally joined the Tudeh Party in 1959 and remained a part of Tudeh until January 1979, when it resumed operating under its own name. Nonetheless, it remains closely allied to the Tudeh, and the two groups issued two joint communiques in summer 1981. ADP leader Shirvan Ibrahimi is a Tudeh Politburo member. The ADP maintained ties to the KDP despite conflicting territorial claims, but these may have collapsed since the KDP-Tudeh breach.

25X1

25X1

Baluch. Frequent unconfirmed reports of Soviet meddling in Baluchistan probably are exaggerated but indicate continuing low-level, low-risk efforts to exert pressure on Tehran. Moscow remains interested in the distant province because of its strategic location and the potential for influence in the Baluch areas of Pakistan. The focus of Soviet attention will remain in Pakistani Baluchistan, where the majority of Baluch live and where leftist organizations and pro-Soviet sympathizers are much stronger than in Iran.

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

In both the Pakistani and Iranian areas of Baluchistan, the Soviets are increasing contacts with students and other leftwing groups, 25X1
They have not had much success in wooing 25X1
Iranian tribal leaders but reportedly continue to offer funds, arms, and support for a united Baluchistan. Such support probably is focused on co-opting the Baluch in southern Afghanistan and undermining the regime in Pakistan. 25X1

Qashqai. Even though Qashqai opposition is not a major threat to the regime, continued dissatisfaction and disillusionment may provide opportunities for exploitation by Soviet sympathizers. 25X1
25X1
there is little abatement of hostility toward the United States, which is still blamed for many of Iran's ills. In contrast, many Qashqai 25X1
claim not to feel threatened by the USSR. Many young Qashqai reportedly have been radicalized and point to the Soviet system, particularly under Stalin, as a model of political and economic development. 25X1

Turkomans and Arabs. The regime remains sensitive to Soviet influence in the Turkoman area. In January Majlis Speaker Rafsanjani, commenting on the violent clashes in Amol, claimed that the region had been a "Communist stronghold" since the beginning of the revolution. We have no information on Soviet involvement in leftist political or military activity in the region. If leftist political activity increases, however, opportunities for Soviet involvement in the area might improve considerably. 25X1

Similarly, the Arab areas have long been a focus of government concern because of leftist political activity among the oil and port workers in the region. Nevertheless, we have no information that significant activity is inspired or influenced by the USSR. 25X1

25X1